

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A method of controlling a process performed by a semiconductor processing tool, comprising:

inputting process data relating to an actual process being performed by the semiconductor processing tool;

inputting a first principles physical model including a set of computer-encoded differential equations, the first principles physical model describing at least one of a basic physical or chemical attribute of the semiconductor processing tool;

performing first principles simulation for the actual process being performed during performance of the actual process using the physical model to provide a first principles simulation result in accordance with the process data relating to the actual process being performed in order to simulate the actual process being performed;

using the first principles simulation result obtained during the performance of the actual process to build an empirical model; and

selecting at least one of the first principles simulation result and the empirical model to control the actual process being performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 2 (Previously Presented): The method of Claim 1, wherein said inputting process data comprises directly inputting the data relating to the actual process being performed by the semiconductor processing tool from at least one of a physical sensor and a metrology tool physically mounted on the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 3 (Previously Presented): The method of Claim 1, wherein said inputting process data comprises indirectly inputting the data relating to the actual process being performed by the semiconductor processing tool from at least one of a manual input device and a database.

Claim 4 (Original): The method of Claim 3, wherein said indirectly inputting comprises inputting data recorded from a process previously performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 5 (Original): The method of Claim 3, wherein said indirectly inputting comprises inputting data set by a simulation operator.

Claim 6 (Previously Presented): The method of Claim 1, wherein said inputting process data comprises inputting data relating to at least one of the physical characteristics of the semiconductor processing tool and the semiconductor tool environment.

Claim 7 (Previously Presented): The method of Claim 1, wherein said inputting process data comprises inputting data relating to at least one of a characteristic and a result of a process performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 8 (Original): The method of Claim 1, wherein said inputting a first principles physical model comprises inputting a spatially resolved model of the geometry of the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 9 (Previously Presented): The method of Claim 1, wherein said inputting a first principles physical model comprises inputting fundamental equations as the set of computer-encoded differential equations necessary to perform first principles simulation for a desired simulation result.

Claim 10 (Original): The method of Claim 1, wherein said performing first principles simulation comprises performing first principles simulation concurrently with the process performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 11 (Previously Presented): The method of Claim 1, further comprising performing first principles simulation independent of the process performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 12 (Original): The method of Claim 1, wherein said performing first principles simulation comprises using the input data to set a boundary condition of the first principles simulation model.

Claim 13 (Original): The method of Claim 1, wherein said performing first principles simulation comprises using the input data to set an initial condition of the first principles simulation model.

Claim 14 (Original): The method of Claim 1, wherein said using the first principles simulation result comprises using the first principles simulation result to control the process performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 15 (Currently Amended): The method of Claim 1, further comprising using a network of interconnected resources inside a semiconductor device manufacturing facility to perform ~~at least one of the process steps~~ the first principles simulation recited in Claim 1.

Claim 16 (Original): The method of Claim 15, further comprising using code parallelization among interconnected computational resources to share the computational load of the first principles simulation.

Claim 17 (Original): The method of Claim 15, further comprising sharing simulation information among interconnected resources to control the process performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 18 (Original): The method of Claim 17, wherein said sharing simulation information comprises distributing simulation results among the interconnected resources to reduce redundant execution of substantially similar first principles simulations by different resources.

Claim 19 (Original): The method of Claim 17, wherein said sharing simulation information comprises distributing model changes among the interconnected resources to reduce redundant refinements of first principles simulations by different resources.

Claim 20 (Currently Amended): The method of Claim ~~15~~ 1, further comprising using remote resources via a wide area network to control the semiconductor process performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 21 (Previously Presented): The method of Claim 20, wherein said using remote resources comprises using at least one of remote computational and storage resources via a wide area network to control the semiconductor process performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 22 (Original): The method of Claim 1, wherein said performing first principles simulation utilizes at least one of an ANSYS computer code, a FLUENT computer code, a CFRDC-ACE computer code, and a direct simulation Monte Carlo computer code.

Claim 23 (Original): The method of Claim 1, wherein said using the first principles simulation result to control comprises:

controlling at least one of a material processing system, an etch system, a photoresist spin coating system, a lithography system, a dielectric coating system, a deposition system, a rapid thermal processing system for thermal annealing, and a batch diffusion furnace.

Claim 24 (Original): The method of Claim 23, wherein said using the first principles simulation result to control comprises:

controlling at least one of a chemical vapor deposition system and a physical vapor deposition system.

Claim 25 (Original): The method of Claim 1 wherein said inputting data comprises: inputting at least one of etch rate, deposition rate, etch selectivity, an etch critical dimension, an etch feature anisotropy, a film property, a plasma density, an ion energy, a concentration of a chemical specie, a photoresist mask film thickness, a photoresist pattern dimension.

Claim 26 (Original): The method of Claim 1, wherein said inputting data comprises:
inputting physical geometric parameters of at least one of a material processing system, an etch system, a photoresist spin coating system, a lithography system, a dielectric coating system, a deposition system, a rapid thermal processing system for thermal annealing, and a batch diffusion furnace.

Claim 27 (Original): The method of Claim 1, wherein said using the first principles simulation result to control comprises:
controlling the semiconductor processing tool by using empirical model output to adjust said process performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 28 (Currently Amended): A system comprising:
a semiconductor processing tool configured to perform a process;
an input device configured to input data relating to an actual process being performed by the semiconductor processing tool; and
a first principles simulation processor configured to:
input a first principles physical model including a set of computer-encoded differential equations describing at least one of a basic physical or chemical attribute of the semiconductor processing tool, and
perform first principles simulation for the actual process being performed during performance of the actual process using the physical model to provide a first principles simulation result in accordance with the process data relating to the actual process being performed in order to simulate the actual process being performed, and

using the first principles simulation result obtained during the performance of the actual process to build an empirical model, wherein at least one of said first principles simulation result and said empirical model is selected to control the actual process being performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 29 (Original): The system of Claim 28, wherein said input device comprises at least one of a physical sensor and a metrology tool physically mounted on the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 30 (Original): The system of Claim 28, wherein said input device comprises at least one of a manual input device and a database.

Claim 31 (Original): The system of Claim 30, wherein said input device is configured to input data recorded from a process previously performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 32 (Original): The system of Claim 30, wherein said input device is configured to input data set by a simulation operator.

Claim 33 (Original): The system of Claim 28, wherein said input device is configured to input data relating to at least one of the physical characteristics of the semiconductor processing tool and the semiconductor tool environment.

Claim 34 (Original): The system of Claim 28, wherein said input device is configured to input data relating to at least one of a characteristic and a result of a process performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 35 (Original): The system of Claim 28, wherein said processor is configured to input a first principles physical model comprising a spatially resolved model of the geometry of the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 36 (Previously Presented): The system of Claim 28, wherein said processor is configured to input a first principles physical model comprising fundamental equations as the set of computer-encoded differential equations necessary to perform first principles simulation for a desired simulation result.

Claim 37 (Original): The system of Claim 28, wherein said processor is configured to perform said first principles simulation concurrently with the process performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 38 (Original): The system of Claim 28, wherein said processor is configured to perform said first principles simulation not concurrently with the process performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 39 (Original): The system of Claim 28, wherein said processor is configured to perform said first principles simulation at least by using the input data to set a boundary condition of the first principles simulation model.

Claim 40 (Original): The system of Claim 28, wherein said processor is configured to perform said first principles simulation at least by using the input data to set an initial condition of the first principles simulation model.

Claim 41 (Original): The system of Claim 28, wherein said processor is configured to use the first principles simulation result to control the process performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 42 (Currently Amended): The system of Claim 28, further comprising a network of interconnected resources inside a semiconductor device manufacturing facility and connected to said processor and configured to assist said processor in performing at least one of the inputting a first principles simulation model and performing a first principles simulation.

Claim 43 (Original): The system of Claim 42, wherein said network of interconnected resources is configured to use code parallelization with said processor to share the computational load of the first principles simulation.

Claim 44 (Original): The system of Claim 42, wherein said network of interconnected resources is configured to share simulation information with said processor to facilitate said process performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 45 (Original): The system of Claim 44, wherein said network of interconnected resources is configured to distribute simulation results to said processor to reduce redundant execution of substantially similar first principles simulations.

Claim 46 (Original): The system of Claim 44, wherein said network of interconnected resources is configured to distribute model changes to said processor to reduce redundant refinements of first principles simulations.

Claim 47 (Currently Amended): The system of Claim ~~42~~ 28, further comprising remote resources connected to said processor via a wide area network and configured to facilitate the semiconductor process performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 48 (Original): The system of Claim 47, wherein said remote resources comprise at least one of a computational and a storage resource.

Claim 49 (Original): The system of Claim 28, wherein said processor is configured to perform first principles simulation by utilizing at least one of an ANSYS computer code, a FLUENT computer code, a CFRDC-ACE computer code, and a direct simulation Monte Carlo computer code.

Claim 50 (Original): The system of Claim 28, wherein said processor is configured to use the first principles simulation result to control by controlling at least one of a material processing system, an etch system, a photoresist spin coating system, a lithography system, a dielectric coating system, a deposition system, a rapid thermal processing system for thermal annealing, and a batch diffusion furnace.

Claim 51 (Original): The system of Claim 50, wherein said processor is configured to use the first principles simulation result to control by controlling at least one of a chemical vapor deposition system and a physical vapor deposition system.

Claim 52 (Original): The system of Claim 28, wherein said processor is configured to input at least one of etch rate, deposition rate, etch selectivity, an etch critical dimension, an etch feature anisotropy, a film property, a plasma density, an ion energy, a concentration of a chemical specie, a photoresist mask film thickness, a photoresist pattern dimension.

Claim 53 (Original): The system of Claim 28, wherein said processor is configured to input physical geometric parameters of at least one of a material processing system, an etch system, a photoresist spin coating system, a lithography system, a dielectric coating system , a deposition system, a rapid thermal processing system for thermal annealing, and a batch diffusion furnace.

Claim 54 (Original): The system of Claim 28, wherein said processor is configured to use the first principles simulation result to control by controlling the semiconductor processing tool by using empirical model output to adjust said process performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 55 (Currently Amended): A system for facilitating a process performed by a semiconductor processing tool, comprising:

means for inputting process data relating to an actual process being performed by the semiconductor processing tool;

means for inputting a first principles physical model including a set of computer-encoded differential equations, the first principles physical model describing at least one of a basic physical or chemical attribute of the semiconductor processing tool;

means for performing first principles simulation for the actual process being performed during performance of the actual process using the physical model to provide a first principles simulation result in accordance with the process data relating to the actual process being performed in order to simulate the actual process being performed;

means for using the first principles simulation result obtained during the performance of the actual process to build an empirical model; and

means for selecting at least one of the first principles simulation result and the empirical model to control the actual process being performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 56 (Currently Amended): The system of Claim 55, further comprising means for sharing inside a semiconductor device manufacturing facility the computational load of the first principles simulation.

Claim 57 (Original): The system of Claim 55, further comprising means for sharing simulation information among interconnected resources to facilitate a process performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 58 (Currently Amended): A computer readable medium encoded with a computer program containing program instructions for execution on a processor, which when executed by the computer system, cause the processor to perform the steps of:

inputting process data relating to an actual process being performed by the semiconductor processing tool;

inputting a first principles physical model including a set of computer-encoded differential equations, the first principles physical model describing at least one of a basic physical or chemical attribute of the semiconductor processing tool;

performing first principles simulation for the actual process being performed during performance of the actual process using the physical model to provide a first principles simulation result in accordance with the process data relating to the actual process being performed in order to simulate the actual process being performed;

using the first principles simulation result obtained during the performance of the actual process to build an empirical model; and

selecting at least one of the first principles simulation result and the empirical model to control the actual process being performed by the semiconductor processing tool.

Claim 59 (Previously Presented): The method of Claim 1, wherein said performing a first principles simulation comprises:

providing for the first principles simulation a reuse of known solutions as initial conditions for the first principles simulation.

Claim 60 (Previously Presented): The system of Claim 28, wherein the first principles simulator is configured to provide for the first principles simulation a reuse of known solutions as initial conditions for the first principles simulation.

Claim 61 (Previously Presented): The system of Claim 55, wherein said means for performing a first principles simulation comprises:

means for providing for the first principles simulation a reuse of known solutions as initial conditions for the first principles simulation.